FACULTY OF HISTORY

Schwarzman Centre for the Humanities, Radcliffe Observatory Quarter, Woodstock Road, Oxford, OX2 6GG

www.history.ox.ac.uk

Summary

Post	Koch History Centre Fellowship
Department/Faculty	Faculty of History
Division	Humanities
College and Location	Wadham College, Parks Rd, Oxford OX1 3PN
Grade and salary	Grade 8: point 5: £55,031 per annum (inclusive of Oxford University Weighting of £1,730).
Hours	Full-time (1 FTE, 37.5 hours per week)
Contract type	Fixed Term, 12 months
Start Date	01/09/2027
Vacancy reference	189586
Application deadline	12 noon (UK time) on 14/12/2026
How to apply	For details of what to submit with your application, please see the 'How to apply' section below
Fellowship Theme for 2026-27	Trust and Credibility
Principal Investigator / supervisor	Professor Rob Iliffe

The Koch History Centre

The Koch History Centre provides a new institutional home in Oxford for the pursuit of world-class historical research. Funded initially for 5 years, the Centre received its first intake of fellows in 2025.

The Centre aims to promote curiosity-driven humanities research with a strong emphasis on multi- and inter-disciplinary approaches to the study of history. It offers scholars the time and facilities to undertake fundamental historical study, and its focus is on supporting the production of innovative historical research while adhering to the best traditions of scholarship.

The Centre is administered through the Faculty of History, which is part of the Humanities Division of the University, and hosted by Wadham College. It recruits scholars working on a wide variety of regions and periods, and forms a community of researchers who will interact fruitfully with other fellows and with colleagues across the College and the University. Fellows will be selected solely on the basis of academic excellence, and the selection criteria are laid out below.

Koch History Centre Fellowships

The Centre appoints 9 Fellows and 3 Senior Fellows each year. The emphasis on attracting early-career scholars flows from the desire to nurture outstanding researchers, who will shape the field for the next generation.

Centre Fellowships are for a period of one year (i.e. 12 months), and are open to any postdoctoral, early career (tenure track) or tenured academic within 10 years of being awarded their PhD (measured from the viva voce examination) at the application submission deadline. Allowances will be made in the assessment of an applicant's track record within this 10-year limit for periods of parental or carers leave, and illness. Extensions to the 10-year limit will not be made, but those beyond this are encouraged to apply to the Senior Fellowship positions, which are also of one year's duration and are open to individuals whose PhD was granted more than 10 years before the deadline. These allowances will also be made for applicants to the Senior Fellowships, and we welcome applications from those who require them.

Please ensure that you have responded to the correct ad for your situation, as ineligible Fellowship applications will not be considered for Senior Fellowships.

The role of a fellow

Each year, the Centre Fellowship Committee selects a new theme as the programme's focus. Fellows will be working on projects related to that year's theme. The committee chooses broad themes to encourage applications from scholars across all regions and historical periods, drawing on a wide range of methodologies and areas of expertise.

The Centre is particularly concerned to foster multidisciplinary discussion about different historiographical approaches and methods. It appoints scholars who can articulate clearly what their interpretive methods are, and whose work engages with the chosen theme in a way that allows them to compare and contrast their own method with other approaches. There is no presumption that any one historical approach is better than any other, and it is expected that a focus on approaches and methods will facilitate fruitful conversation between Centre fellows with disparate historical interests and concerns.

The Centre hosts four seminars per eight-week term, and all fellows will give one seminar talk on their project during their stay. The seminars are the heart of intellectual life at the Centre, and contributing to the collective discussions of these meetings forms a central element of the fellowships. These are work-in-progress talks that are open to audiences drawn from across the University. These seminars will be complemented by lectures and seminars given by other speakers, whose research intersects with the annual theme.

In addition to giving a seminar talk, Fellows will be interviewed on video for our YouTube channel, and produce an essay of 5,000-8,000 words on their project, for publication as an edited volume or work-in-progress paper on our website.

Fellows are expected to make full use of the extensive resources and engage with the vibrant research communities across the University of Oxford, and during term they should be in Oxford for the majority of their working week. Flexible work spaces are available across the College, Faculty, and various libraries, and fellows will also have access to the Koch History Centre Common Room at Wadham. While limited research travel is permitted during the course of the fellowship, this should only be undertaken outside of term time.

The Fellowship roles have been salaried commensurate with a higher level of experience than a standard postdoctoral position. As such, the panel are looking for those applicants with a strong research profile, in line with what would be expected after a few years' postdoctoral experience, and who show exceptional promise for the years ahead. Those with a recently-completed doctorate are eligible to apply, but are unlikely to be successful if they cannot demonstrate this level of expertise and track record.

College and Faculty life

Fellows will benefit from the lively interdisciplinary research culture of Wadham College. The Wadham Fellowship comprises around 70 members, and apart from the History fellows (see further details below) there are fellows in cognate disciplines, including Classics, Medieval and Modern Languages, Philosophy, Anthropology, Economics, Politics, and Asian and Middle Eastern Studies. There is also a substantial body of undergraduate and graduate students reading for degrees in History, and the joint schools with History. A number of current Wadham fellows in other disciplines, such as Environmental Science, engage in conversations and collaboration with colleagues in the humanities and social sciences.

The Centre is associated with Wadham College, but Fellows are employees of the Faculty of History and as such are not Fellows of Wadham College. Nevertheless, Wadham extends generous hospitality, including lunching and dining rights and membership of the Senior Common Room, to Koch History Centre Fellows in recognition of the value of their contribution to the intellectual life of the College.

As members of the Faculty of History, fellows are encouraged to participate in its considerable range of research seminars and lecture series. The fellowships are research posts, and they carry no teaching obligation; but there are opportunities for some teaching or supervision over the course of the year. Fellows are strongly encouraged to participate in the academic life of the Faculty and the Schwarzman Centre for the Humanities, both as participants in Faculty seminars and through their interactions with the graduate students and postdoctoral research scholars in the Faculty and elsewhere in the Humanities Division.

Fellows will have full access to the College and University libraries, and to the digital resources available through the Bodleian Library.

Fellowship Theme for 2027-8: Trust and Credibility

Over the past two decades, financial crises, political polarisation, disputes over expertise, and the circulation of unreliable information have raised urgent questions about whom we trust and what makes language and institutions credible. The advent of powerful AI models has sharpened these concerns by inviting reliance on systems whose operations are partially or completely opaque. Such problems are far from being uniquely modern. Across history, while trust has enabled political and spiritual authority, economic exchange, and social cooperation, its contestation and collapse has exposed the vulnerability of apparently stable arrangements.

The Koch History Centre fellowship theme for 2027–2028 invites historians not only to investigate how trust and credibility have been established, contested and lost in different periods and regions, but also to consider how they shaped historical possibilities. How did societies create confidence in people, texts, objects, and institutions, who and what was deemed credible, who and what was excluded, and on what grounds? What role did documents, instruments, and technologies play in making truth-claims believable? Why did particular trust relations and forms arise when they did? Which arrangements endured, which failed, and what alternatives remained available?

Trust and credibility are closely related. Trust involves reliance on language, people, material structures, or institutions under conditions of uncertainty; credibility concerns the grounds on which individuals, texts, claims, and authorities are deemed worthy of belief. Distrust and the loss of credibility have significant histories, arising from deception, forgery, espionage, unequal power, failed promises, or contested authority, it has generated safeguards such as audits, guarantees, independent witnesses, and checks on power. How do social, linguistic, textual and institutional mechanisms create and maintain confidence in their operations and 'credentials', and how do they restore it when it is eroded or lost?

In the ancient world, trust was understood to be central to the operation of language and the relationship between rhetoric and dialectic. It lay at the heart of historiography as a self-reflexive discipline, operating across the boundary of recording what actually occurred and narrating what might plausibly have happened. It has also been central to the institutional analysis of ancient economies; for example, the understanding of credit and credit instruments has been transformed in recent years, but their broader social and economic consequences remain little understood.

In medieval societies, trust was bound up with truth-claims about God, nature and human association. It could be cultivated through kinship, oaths, allegiance and religious affiliation, but also through narratives, documents, seals, witnesses and institutions that could confer credibility beyond autopsy and personal acquaintance. Such mechanisms sustained linguistic legitimacy, political authority, commercial exchange and religious communities. How did disputes over language, evidence, authenticity and obligation challenge established relationships of trust, and when did their breakdown create opportunities for institutional change or alternative forms of social, philosophical and literary authority?

Modernity is often told as the story of trust made impersonal. In that story, confidence passed from persons to procedures, from patrons to bureaucracies, from reputations to credit ratings, and from witnesses to scientific method. Yet modern religious authority, mercantile networks, imperial governance, scientific testimony, and financial institutions have continued to rest on personal ties and acts of faith, and their crises have repeatedly exposed that dependence - a fact that shows that effectively functioning trust relations often leave little documentary trace. Did modern institutions reduce the need for trust, or relocate it where it was harder to see and to contest? And where trust was absent, did empires, states, and markets rely on coercion to do without it?

We encourage applications from scholars working on any period or region who are seeking to offer novel accounts of the key roles that aspects of trust and credibility have played throughout history. Such proposals could, for example, address the causes of sudden, catastrophic collapses of trust and credibility, as in so-called Black Swan events. We particularly welcome applications that reflect on the extent to which such events are shaped or determined by long-term processes or by individual decisions: how can historians explain events without erasing the roles of contingency or chance?

Responsibilities

- Conduct world-class independent research based on the theme for the relevant year of the Koch fellowship
- Analyse detailed and complex qualitative and/or quantitative data from a variety of sources, and generate original ideas
- Write book chapters and research articles for peer-reviewed journals and/or work on the production of a monograph for publication with a reputable academic or trade press, contributing to the Faculty's REF (Research Excellence Framework) submission
- Give one seminar talk during the period of the Koch fellowship and engage productively with the work of others, contributing to discussions concerning methodological and historiographical topics at these meetings
- Work with a video production company to produce a video interview for publication on the Centre's YouTube channel
- Produce an essay of 5,000-8,000 words, for publication as an edited volume or work-in-progress paper on our website
- Contribute to the collective research culture of the Koch History Centre, Faculty of History and Wadham College
- Participate in the academic life of the Faculty and the Schwarzman Centre, both in the range of research seminars and lecture series and through interactions with students and postdoctoral research scholars in the Faculty and elsewhere in the Humanities Division
- Collaborate with other Fellows to advance the historiographical aims of the centre

Selection criteria

Essential selection criteria

Applications will be judged only against the criteria which are set out below. You should make sure that your application shows very clearly how closely your skills and experience meet these criteria. We are committed to fairness, consistency and transparency in selection decisions. Members of selection committees will be aware of the principles of equality of opportunity and fair selection and there will be both female and male members of the selection committee. Selection committees will explicitly take into account the aforementioned career breaks or other factors, such as part-time working or disability, which may have had an impact on the quantity of candidates' publications.

- Hold a relevant PhD/DPhil with post-qualification research experience. Postdoctoral, early career (tenure track) or tenured academic within 10 years of being awarded their PhD (measured from the viva voce examination) at the time of the application submission deadline
- Strong post-doctoral publication record, demonstrating ability to think beyond the confines of one's thesis, and familiarity with the existing literature and research in the field
- Possess sufficient specialist knowledge in the discipline to develop new research projects and methodologies
- Ability to independently plan and manage a research project
- Outstanding communication and interpersonal skills, with proof of professionalism as a colleague and a track record of working well with others

- A research project on a topic relevant to this year's theme and to the historiographical aims of the Centre
- Ability to position the proposed project within the context of the Faculty of History and Wadham College, in terms of subject matter and ethos

Desirable selection criteria

- Proven track record in research impact and/or public engagement
- Experience of creating collaborative and inclusive environments with people from different backgrounds.

Pre-employment screening

Standard checks

If you are offered the post, the offer will be subject to standard pre-employment checks. You will be asked to provide: proof of your right-to-work in the UK; proof of your identity; and (if we haven't done so already) we will contact the referees you have nominated. If you have previously worked for the University we will also verify key information such as your dates of employment and reason for leaving your previous role with the department/unit where you worked. You will also be asked to complete a health declaration so that you can tell us about any health conditions or disabilities for which you may need us to make appropriate adjustments.

Please read the candidate notes on the University's pre-employment screening procedures at: https://www.jobs.ox.ac.uk/pre-employment-checks

About the University of Oxford

Welcome to the University of Oxford. We aim to lead the world in research and education for the benefit of society both in the UK and globally. Oxford's researchers engage with academic, commercial and cultural partners across the world to stimulate high-quality research and enable innovation through a broad range of social, policy and economic impacts.

We believe our strengths lie both in empowering individuals and teams to address fundamental questions of global significance, while providing all our staff with a welcoming and inclusive workplace that enables everyone to develop and do their best work. Recognising that diversity is our strength, vital for innovation and creativity, we aspire to build a truly diverse community which values and respects every individual's unique contribution.

While we have long traditions of scholarship, we are also forward-looking, creative and cutting-edge. Oxford is one of Europe's most entrepreneurial universities and we rank first in the UK for university spin-outs, and in recent years we have spun out 15-20 new companies every year. We are also recognised as leaders in support for social enterprise.

Join us and you will find a unique, democratic and international community, a great range of staff benefits and access to a vibrant array of cultural activities in the beautiful city of Oxford.

For more information, please visit www.ox.ac.uk/about/organisation.

Wadham College

Wadham is one of the larger colleges of the University of Oxford, with approximately 450 undergraduates, 250 graduates, and over 70 Fellows. Founded in 1610 by Nicholas and Dorothy Wadham, Wadham College has a strong commitment to academic values, within a liberal and progressive atmosphere. The College is academically strong, and regularly features in the top ten in the annual ranking of Oxford colleges for academic performance in final examinations.

A particular focus of Wadham College rests on fostering multi- and inter-disciplinary dialogue between scholars whose research interests may cut across formal departmental boundaries. Cooperation and conversation with the fellows of the Centre within this wider academic community is precisely what association with the College is designed to facilitate. Wadham's historical research is characterized by a commitment to interdisciplinary approaches, linking history with literature, philosophy, theology and the social sciences. Wadham has a long and distinguished tradition of historical research and teaching, nurtured by numerous influential scholars throughout its history. Past fellows include Lawrence Stone, whose pioneering work in social history redefined the study of the early modern family and society, and C. S. L. Davies, an expert on late fifteenth- and sixteenth-century politics.

Its current history fellows are Norman Aselmeyer, a social and urban historian of East Africa, Matthew Kempshall, an historian of medieval political thought and the classical tradition, Laure Miolo, a specialist in medieval Latin manuscript studies, Tehila Sasson, an historian of economic life in the British empire and the international order, Marko Ilić, a specialist in recent and contemporary art, and George Southcombe, an historian of early modern religion, literature, and culture. Current junior research fellows include Anil Askin, an economic and social historian of the 17th and 18th-century Ottoman Empire, and Sophie Aldred, an historian of early modern Britain and its expanding world. Wadham historians from other departments include Peter Thonemann, a classicist specialising in the Greek-speaking world from the archaic period to Late Antiquity, as well as Achaemenid Persia.

Wadham has long been at the forefront of advancing equality of opportunity, and celebrates vigorous debate, independent thought, and academic excellence. The College seeks to create a welcoming, accessible, and secure environment in which to work, study, live, and visit. The collegiate community embraces people of all ages, backgrounds, races/ethnicities, nationalities, beliefs (including religious beliefs), genders, sexualities, dis/abilities, and appearances.

Further information about the College can be obtained from http://www.wadham.ox.ac.uk

The Faculty of History

The Faculty of History in Oxford is the largest in the United Kingdom and one of the largest in the world. It has a very strong international reputation for its scholarship and its teaching of undergraduate and graduate students, with particular strengths in the history of the British Isles, continental Europe, imperial and global history, the United States, economic and social history, intellectual history and the history of science, medicine and technology. Within the Faculty there is also a department for the History of Art and several dedicated research centres.

The Faculty, including the Department of History of Art, is located at the new, purpose-built Schwarzman Centre for the Humanities: https://schwarzmancentre.humanities.ox.ac.uk/. The Schwarzman Centre has been designed to be a dynamic hub dedicated to the humanities. For the first time in the University's history, humanities faculties are housed together with a new humanities library

in a space designed to encourage learning and experimentation. The Schwarzman Centre is located with the Radcliffe Observatory Quarter (RAQ), a central and accessible part of Oxford.

More information about the Faculty can be found at: www.history.ox.ac.uk.

The Faculty holds a bronze Athena Swan award to recognise advancement of gender equality: representation, progression and success for all.

The Humanities Division

The Humanities Division is one of four academic divisions in the University of Oxford, bringing together the faculties of Classics; English; History; Linguistics, Philology and Phonetics; Medieval and Modern Languages; Music; Asian and Middle Eastern Studies; Philosophy; and Theology and Religion, as well as the Ruskin School of Art. The Division has more than 500 members of academic staff, approximately 4,100 undergraduates (more than a third of the total undergraduate population of the University), 1,000 postgraduate research students and 720 students on postgraduate taught courses.

The Division offers world-class teaching and research, backed by the superb resources of the University's libraries and museums, including the famous Bodleian Libraries, with their 13 million volumes and priceless early book and manuscript collections, and the Ashmolean Museum of Art and Archaeology. Such historic resources are linked to innovative agendas in research and teaching, with an increasing emphasis on interdisciplinary study. Our faculties are among the largest in the world, enabling Oxford to offer an education in Arts and Humanities unparalleled in its range of subjects, from music and fine art to ancient and modern languages.

For more information please visit: www.humanities.ox.ac.uk.

International Staff and Housing

One of Oxford's great strengths is its truly international body of research and teaching staff from over 140 countries, and we welcome applications from academics across the world. We can help international staff and partners/families make the transition to Oxford. Information about relocation, living and working in the UK and Oxford is available at welcome.ox.ac.uk.

General information about home rental and purchase is available at https://www.ox.ac.uk/about/jobs/life-in-oxford/housing-and-finance.

How to apply

Applications are made through our online recruitment portal. Information about how to apply is available on our Jobs website https://www.jobs.ox.ac.uk/how-to-apply.

Your application will be judged solely on the basis of how you demonstrate that you meet the selection criteria stated in the job description.

As part of your application, you will be asked to provide details of two referees and indicate whether we can contact them now.

You will be asked to upload a CV and a supporting statement.

The CV should be no longer than three pages in length, and should include details of your education, academic experience, research outputs (e.g. publications, exhibitions), and any relevant skills (such as language proficiency). The CV should be an A4-sized document, with margins of at least 2cm, single-spaced, and a minimum font size of 11pt.

You will need to complete the supporting statement using our online form. When you complete this, the system will email you a PDF of your form, which you will need to upload as your supporting statement. Your statement must explain how you meet each of the selection criteria for the post using examples of your skills and experience. This may include experience gained in employment, education, or during career breaks (such as time out to care for dependants). The form will also ask a series of questions about your proposed project. There is a character limit for each question.

You must upload the PDF of your supporting statement to your application. If you do not use the online form for the supporting statement, or if you disregard word or page limits, your application will be deemed ineligible.

Please upload all documents as **PDF files** with your name and the document type in the filename.

All applications must be received by **midday** UK time on the closing date stated in the online advertisement.

Information for priority candidates

A priority candidate is a University employee who is seeking redeployment because they have been advised that they are at risk of redundancy, or on grounds of ill-health/disability. Priority candidates are issued with a redeployment letter by their employing department(s).

If you are a priority candidate, please ensure that you attach your redeployment letter to your application (or email it to the contact address on the advert if the application form used for the vacancy does not allow attachments).

If you need help

Application FAQs, including technical troubleshooting advice is available at: Support with Online Applications

Non-technical questions about this job should be addressed to the recruiting department directly *to recruitments@history.ox.ac.uk*.

To return to the online application at any stage, please go to: Applications Process

Please note that you will receive an automated email from our online recruitment portal to confirm receipt of your application. **Please check your spam/junk mail** if you do not receive this email. You may also receive updates or questions on your application via the same means.

Please be aware that due to the volume of applications we receive, we are unable to provide feedback on unsuccessful applications.

Important information for candidates

Data Privacy

Please note that any personal data submitted to the University as part of the job application process will be processed in accordance with the GDPR and related UK data protection legislation. For further information, please see the University's Privacy Notice for Job Applicants at: https://www.ox.ac.uk/about/how-we-are-run/policies-and-statements/policy-hub/job-applicant-privacy-policy. The University's Policy on Data Protection is available at: Data Protection Policy

The University's policy on retirement

The University operates an Employer Justified Retirement Age (EJRA) for very senior research posts at **grade RSIV/D35 and clinical equivalents E62 and E82** of 30 September before the 70th birthday.
For **existing** employees on these grades, any employment beyond the retirement age is subject to approval through the procedures: The ERJA

There is no normal or fixed age at which staff in posts at other grades have to retire. Staff at these grades may elect to retire in accordance with the rules of the applicable pension scheme, as may be amended from time to time.

Equal Opportunity

The University of Oxford is committed to equal opportunity, and to being a place where everyone belongs and is supported to succeed. We recognise how the diversity of our community enriches our ability to deliver on our academic mission.

We welcome applications from individuals from all backgrounds, including those under-represented within higher education. No applicant or members of staff shall be unlawfully discriminated against on the basis of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation.

Employment with the University and progression within employment will be determined according to personal merit and the application of criteria related to the duties and conditions of the post. In all cases, the primary consideration will be the ability to perform the job.

As stated in the University's Equality Policy and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan, our commitment to equality and diversity goes hand in hand with our commitment to academic freedom and free speech.

Benefits of working at the University

Employee benefits

University employees enjoy 38 days' paid holiday, generous pension schemes, flexible working options, support for sustainable travel and other discounts. Staff can also access a huge range of personal and professional development opportunities. See Working here .

Employee Assistance Programme

As part of our wellbeing offering staff get free access to a confidential employee assistance programme, available 24/7 for 365 days a year. Find out more at Healthcare and wellbeing

University Club and sports facilities

Membership of the University Club is free for University staff. It offers social, sporting, and hospitality facilities. Staff can also use the University Sports Centre on Iffley Road at discounted rates, including a fitness centre, powerlifting room, and swimming pool. See www.club.ox.ac.uk and https://www.sport.ox.ac.uk/.

Information for staff new to Oxford

Please see our Life in Oxford webpage for information on relocating to and settling into the Oxford area. The website offers valuable guidance, including information on where to find more details about housing, transportation, finances, healthcare, and other key aspects of living in Oxford and the surrounding region. See Life in Oxford

There is also a visa loan scheme to cover the costs of UK visa applications for staff and their dependants. See Visas and Immigration

Family-friendly benefits

We are a family-friendly employer with one of the most generous family leave schemes in the Higher Education sector (see terms and conditions of employment. Our Childcare Services team provides guidance and support on childcare provision, and offers a range of high-quality childcare options at affordable prices for staff. In addition to 5 University nurseries, we partner with a number of local providers to offer in excess of 450 full time nursery places to our staff. Eligible parents are able to pay for childcare through salary sacrifice, further reducing costs. See Childcare.

Supporting disability and health-related issues (inc menopause)

We are committed to supporting members of staff with disabilities or long-term health conditions, including those experiencing negative effects of menopause. Contact the University's Staff Disability Advisor at staffdisability@admin.ox.ac.uk for further information.

Staff networks

The University has a number of staff networks including for research staff, BME staff, LGBT+ staff, disabled staff network and those going through menopause.

The University of Oxford Newcomers' Club

The University of Oxford Newcomers' Club is run by volunteers that aims to assist the partners of new staff settle into Oxford, and provides them with an opportunity to meet people and make connections in the local area. See www.newcomers.ox.ac.uk

Research staff

The Researcher Hub supports all researchers on fixed-term contracts. They aim to help you settle in comfortably, make connections, grow as a person, extend your research expertise and approach your next career step with confidence. Find out morehttps://www.ox.ac.uk/research/support/researcher-hub/about